

THE ANCORA



STRING QUARTET

**Title: Arts 2006: Isthmus Critics Rate the Year in Local Culture**

**Press:** Isthmus

**By:** Dean Robbins (Editor)

**Date:** December 28, 2006

Madison celebrated its 150th birthday this year. And whatever you think about Madison's arts scene, you've got to admit: It's come a long way since 1856. Back then, there were about two dozen paintings in the town's one museum. Local citizens were so starved for entertainment that they'd arrive in droves to hear a fence painter whistle on the Capitol Square.

Life goes on. But before it does, let's take one more look back at 2006's local highlights, courtesy of Isthmus' arts critics.

***John W. Barker***

...Chamber music is more than ever an important part of Madison's musical life. The Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society continued its spunky and sometimes provocative offerings, now in more programs and shifted to June. The Token Creek Chamber Music Festival pressed on with its varied fare, this year with a local premiere by director John Harbison. The Ancora String Quartet, developing in the last few years, revealed its growing maturity in a September program of Haydn, Brahms and Ravel. Of the two period-instrument groups, the Wisconsin Baroque Ensemble continues its high-quality chamber programs, while Trevor Stephenson's Madison Bach Musicians maintain their devotion mainly to the master's cantatas and concertos.

As summer activities continue to grow, the Madison Early Music Festival was notably successful with its 2006 theme of Renaissance Spanish music; while the Madison Savoyards offered the Gilbert and Sullivan *Patience* in a handsomely sung and beautifully staged production.

Quelle année!

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In addition, the Ancora Quartet will perform at "Sunday Live from the Chazen" -- which is broadcast live statewide -- on Sunday, Jan. 14, from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. It will perform the same Haydn and Ravel quartets as well as Shostakovich's Quartet No. 8, dedicated to "victims of fascism."

The quartet is composed of violinists Leanne Kelso and Robin Ryan, violist Marika Fischer Hoyt and cellist Benjamin Whitcomb.

Every one of the works the Ancora will perform is a certified masterpiece, a "basic" of the quartet repertoire. So if you're looking to expand your knowledge of the string quartet, this would be a great starting place along with the concerts by the UW's Pro Arte Quartet.

Tickets to the Unitarian concerts are available at the door for \$12 each for adults, \$10 for students and seniors and \$6 for children under 12. There will be a free reception following the inaugural concert. For more information, visit [www.ancoraquartet.com](http://www.ancoraquartet.com).